LETTERS

FROM

A COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

TO A

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT,

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

NATION.

SIXTH EDITION.

WITH AN

ADDITIONAL LETTER

TO

His Grace the DUKE of PORTLAND.

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LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

Stafford, Feb. 10, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

NO doubt but the glorious pre-eminence to which the Britiſh name and nation have been raiſed within theſe few years, deſerves the particular attention of the hiſtorian, to whom the pleaſing and inſtructive taſk may deſcend of recording the events of a century the moſt intereſting and important in the annals of Europe; nor is it poſſible to contemplate the proſperous condition of the Britiſh empire at the cloſe of the year 1788, without recollecting that it is the HUNDREDTH anniverſary of that period which fixed the boundaries of prerogative, and ſecured

to the people the ineſtimable bleſſings of a free government; I ſhall therefore entreat your indulgence while I take a curſory ramble over the ſeventeenth century, after which I ſhall, in compliance with your requeſt, give you my undiſguiſed ſentiments on the conduct and principles of Oppoſition; examine the queſtion of Right which they advanced in behalf of the Prince of Wales and afterwards retracted; and demonſtrate the abſolute neceſſity of an explicit and public diſavowal on the part of his Royal Highneſs of any marriage ceremony having taken place between him and Mrs. Fitzherbert; and I ſhall feel the greater pleaſure in delivering my opinion on thoſe tranſactions which paved the way for the Revolution in 1688, becauſe it will prepare your mind for much conſtitutional argument, and convince you, that in defending the juſtice and expediency of the reſtrictions which Parliament has thought proper to impoſe upon the Regent, I have not departed, in the ſmalleſt degree, from the principles which placed the preſent family on the throne, nor ſhewn a want of confidence that is not warranted by the examples of former times. It neither

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ſuits the genius nor temper of this nation to be dependent on the bounty of the Sovereign, nor ſubmit to receive as a *favour* from his hands, what it is entitled to as a *right*; and this proud ſpirit of independence, the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of this country, and which has raiſed it to its preſent rank and conſequence in the world, manifeſted itſelf in the darkeſt ages, and under the worſt of princes.—Even the impatient and ferocious temper of Henry VIII. could not extinguiſh it, and under the weak and pedantic reign of James, it had acquired a degree of vigour that enabled it to diſpute, and finally to wreſt from his unfortunate ſon the power he had abuſed. It has pleaſed Mr. Hume in an hiſtory, which in every other reſpect proves an enlightened and philoſophic mind, and well deſerves to be ranked with our beſt Engliſh Claſſics, to brand with infamy the popular party in thoſe calamitous times, and to reprobate in the ſtrongeſt language, the conduct and principles of thoſe who brought Charles I. to the block; but his reaſoning on this occaſion loſes much of its uſual force, and in commenting on the tranſactions of thoſe

days, he has ſhewn leſs liberality of ſentiment, leſs ſtrength of judgement, and leſs knowledge of mankind than in his Eſſays.—He ſeems to have forgotten that the nation ſtill ſmarted under the laſh of Prerogative, which had been carried to an enormous extent—That it dreaded a continuation of the ſame illegal violence and oppreſſion, and that having ſuffered ſo ſeverely from the tyranny of the Crown, it was natural it ſhould make the Crown ſuffer in its turn. Charles I. aſcended the throne in an unlucky moment, when the minds of men were already in a ferment. He might not in ſtrict juſtice have deſerved the ſeverity he experienced, but it was his fate to feel the terrible effects of that reſentment which had been accumulating for many centuries back, and which never fails to impreſs on the obdurate heart of deſpotiſm this tremendous, but neglected truth; that as all power reſides ultimately in the people, they are to be governed by *opinion*, and not by FORCE.—It was the misfortune of Charles to be puniſhed not only for his own vices, but for thoſe of his predeceſſors.—It is the characteriſtic of the paſſions to be always in extremes. The fury

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of the people, we are willing to admit, broke through the boundaries of law, as well as of prerogative, and overwhelmed at once the conſtitution and monarchy; but in condemning the exceſſes they committed, do not let us forget the predicament in which they ſtood, and that hiſtory ſcarce produces an inſtance of any great change being effected in any ſtate whatever, without much cavil, diſorder, and bloodſhed.—We ſhould alſo remember that this was the firſt opportunity the nation had obtained, after repeated efforts to revenge the wrongs it had ſuffered, and that having brought the grand queſtion to an iſſue, it was no longer in its power to preſerve meaſures with the Crown. The ſcabbard had been thrown away, and no medium remained between the ſacrifice of the SOVEREIGN, or of LIBERTY.—The one was merely perſonal, and could only affect the particular intereſts of a ſolitary family, but the other would have involved the general intereſts of the community, and in its conſequences, extended to the remoteſt poſterity.

Under theſe circumſtances the moſt partial advocate for monarchy would bluſh to aſſert that the latter alternative ought to have been preferred, and yet this ſacrifice muſt have been made if the King had been permitted to live.—They who ſuppoſe he would have pardoned the affronts he had received, if he had been reſtored to the royal dignity, are but little acquainted with the human heart and ſtill leſs with the character of princes. But even if he had poſſeſſed magnanimity enough to have forgiven the oppoſition that had been made to his Government, it was impoſſible that with his notions of Kingſhip, the nation could have had any confidence in his declarations. All compromiſe is at an end, where mutual diſtruſt and mutual hatred prevail, and whatever conceſſions force might have extorted from the impriſoned Monarch in the moment of diſtreſs, and under apprehenſions for his perſonal ſafety, we have no reaſon to believe, from his character in particular, and ſtill leſs from the character of princes in general, that he would have thought himſelf obliged to obſerve them any longer, than he could violate them with impunity. It is not meant to defend in toto

the proceedings of the different parties who united at that time for the preſervation of thoſe rights, which heaven having deſtined for *all*, never intended ſhould be the excluſive property of a *few*; but though their conduct may have been highly reprehenſible on many occaſions, yet the principle on which they acted will bear the ſtricteſt ſcrutiny. Even Mr. Hume with all his partiality for the Houſe of Stuart, and his affected contempt of thoſe who uſurped the Government in the middle of the laſt century, admits that even the moſt violent never meant in the commencement of the controverſy to extirpate monarchy, and that the diſpute had continued a conſiderable time before they had conceived the idea of depriving Charles of his life. This at leaſt proves that there was no premeditated deſign either to murther the King, or to deſtroy the conſtitution, and that being the fact, we may fairly conclude that the motive and final object of the oppoſition to Charles was not for the purpoſe of dictating the law to *him*, but to prevent his dictating the law to *them*—and of courſe his ſucceſſors from dictating it to *us*. Nothing more was meant than to bring him back

back to thoſe principles on which monarchy in this country is founded, and on which his family had been admitted to the regal dignity; and let it be remembered, in juſtice to the principal actors in the tragedy that enſued, that it was not until every other expedient had failed that the PENALTY of the bond was inſiſted upon. The quarrel did not proceed either from perſonal pique to the King, or an inconſtancy of temper in the people. There was nothing diſguſting nor offenſive in the manners of Charles to have provoked or juſtified the one, nor is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe that light or frivolous objections would have excited ſo formidable and ſo general an oppoſition to him in a country where monarchy had been the eſtabliſhed, and even favorite form of Government, during the ſpace of almoſt ſeven hundred years. Neither did it proceed from the ſecret cabals of faction, or of a party reſolved at all events, to diſturb him in the peaceable enjoyment of a Crown, his title to which was univerſally admitted, and could not be diſputed. If he had contented himſelf with the power allotted to him by the conſtitution, a power ſufficiently ample for all the *honeſt* purpoſes of legal Government,

vernment, and if he had not attempted to give to proclamation the force and authority of Acts of Parliament, he might have lived the happieſt and the greateſt prince in Europe. A different conduct involved the kingdom in a civil war, and his family in ruin. And if thoſe who were the firſt to oppoſe his illegal and undefined pretenſions, were afterwards precipitated into meaſures which at this diſtance may appear barbarous and unjuſt, we muſt in ſtrict truth confeſs, that they were inſenſibly led to ſo dangerous an extremity by a train of circumſtances which they did not foreſee in the commencement, and which, even if they had foreſeen, could not have been avoided without relinquiſhing the prize for which they contended. The ancient and expreſſive motto of a Britiſh Sovereign is, *Dieu et mon droit*, God and my right, and not *ſic jubeo, ſic volo*, and whoever adopts the latter, and unfortunately makes it the rule of his conduct, will find his miſtake either in the loſs of his Crown or of his life. The oppoſition that was made to Charles I. declared itſelf as ſoon as it was formed, and it was not formed, until he had ſhewn very evidently that he meant to go-

vern by prerogative, and not by law. It is under this point of view that we are to conſider the tranſaction of the laſt century; and here let it be aſked in what conſiſts the criminality of that period, at which ſome of us affect to look back with horror, and which a miſtaken, perhaps a ſervile attachment to monarchy, would wiſh us to regard as an eternal ſtain upon the nation? Is it becauſe a Sovereign has been compelled to deſcend from his throne to a ſcaffold, that we are to devote the anniverſary of his death to penitence and prayer?

Are we to feel ſuch horror and regret at the death of a man of whoſe guilt one half of the empire is convinced, while thouſands, wantonly ſacrificed at the ſhrine of tyranny, have fallen unpitied, unrevenged, and are ſcarce honoured even with the cold and diſtant notice of the hiſtorian? Are the wrongs inflicted on Royalty to make ſo deep and ſo laſting an impreſſion on the minds of men, and to exact from their innocent poſterity an abject and perpetual acknowledgement of ſorrow and contrition, as if Kings were a

middle order of created beings between God and man, and it was ſacrilege to touch them?

What ſatisfaction has been given for the numerous exactions and oppreſſions of the Crown, down to the period of the Revolution? what atonement has been made, what contrition has been ſhewn for the enormous cruelties exerciſed under the ſanguinary and mercileſs dominion of Henry VIII. and his inexonerable daughter Mary, when the virtuous and peaceable citizen neither found ſecurity in his innocence, nor protection in the laws, but was ignominiouſly torn from his family and friends, and conſigned without remorſe, and even without trial, to the gibbet or the flames?

No day ſtands marked in our calendar in expiation of the guilt and infamy of the Throne; but the firſt inſtance of outrage offered by an injured and inſulted people to Royalty, notwithſtanding the provocations that excited it, and the good that has reſulted from it, is ſtigmatiſed as a crime of the

firſt magnitude by thoſe who forgot that "*the ultimate end of Government is the ſafety of the people, and that the miſeries of* ONE, *are not to be put in competition with the happineſs of* MILLIONS." The exceſſes committed by an unbridled populace, broke looſe from all order and reſtraint, in the middle of the laſt century, and even the puniſhment, violent and unprecedented as it was, that they inflicted on their degraded Sovereign, fall far ſhort of the atrocious cruelties and oppreſſions exerciſed by his immediate predeceſſors on the unoffending anceſtors of that populace. Mankind, in general, are more ſenſible of the injuries they receive than of thoſe they inflict. They are apt to magnify the one, and to diminiſh the other: but on this occaſion they appear to have adopted a different ſentiment, and from the acrimony with which the tranſactions of the laſt century have been deſcribed, and the abhorrence expreſſed at the ſalutary vengeance executed on Charles I. we ſhould conclude that the ideas of paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance were firmly rooted in the mind of man, if we did not know from melancholy

cholý experience, that an abject and ſervile adulation, incompatible at once with the love of liberty and of letters, has too often diſgraced the pen of hiſtory. It is not meant, by apologizing for the conduct of thoſe who brought their Sovereign to a public trial, and afterwards to the block, to recommend an appeal to the firſt principles of ſociety on every ſlight and frivolous pretext that may occur, and ſtill leſs is it meant to approve of riot and revolt; but in condemning the diſorders which terminated in the ſubverſion of monarchy, we ſhould not forget the ſcandalous outrages which had provoked, and in ſome degree juſtified them. A diſtinction ſhould certainly be made between a caſual and tranſitory licentiouſneſs, which was in fact produced by the exorbitant pretenſions of the Crown, and an imperious and brutal abuſe of power, which had trampled law and juſtice under foot for ages, and for which no remedy but reſiſtance remained. A comparative view of the guilt of the people, which was merely momentary, and into which they were precipitated in defence of their rights, and that of the throne, which had been ſyſtematically continued

tinued for ſucceſſive generations, and was wanton and inexcuſable, muſt infallibly leſſen the odium which the friends of monarchy have attempted to throw on the one, while they have obſerved an almoſt total ſilence on the other; nor is it eaſy to reconcile an attachment to the preſent family, with a diſapprobation of the means that placed it on the throne. I ſhould be apt to ſuſpect the ſincerity of the man who ſmiles on the 4th of June, and weeps on the 30th of January. But whatever may be the opinion of men relative to the fate of Charles I. who could not have lived after he broke with the Parliament but on terms diſhonourable to himſelf or dangerous to freedom, this truth is certain, that tyranny and ſuperſtition were effectually expelled theſe happy realms with the Stuart family. And if the Crown hath loſt by the Revolution and the clergy by the Reformation, let it be remembered with pride and gratitude, that liberty hath gained by the one and religion by the other. The pure and genuine doctrines of Chriſt, unencumbered with the buffoonery and pantomime nonſenſe of Rome, are revealed to us in intelligible language, and a ſimplicity of

worſhip,

worſhip, congenial with the ſpirit and conducive to the end of the goſpel, has ſucceeded the ſilent grimace, and groteſque exhibitions of an illiterate and unprincipled prieſthood, whoſe profligate manners and exorbitant vexations were no leſs injurious to ſociety, than diſgraceful to morals. If the limits of an undefined prerogative were aſcertained in 1688, and the Sovereign has been compelled to conform himſelf to known and poſitive laws, whoſe mild and benevolent influence extends equally to the Prince and peaſant, let it be recollected, that the allegiance of the people has been happily converted into an affectionate attachment to his perſon and government, and that the ſpirit of *Revolt*, has given place to that of *Loyalty*.

The blind and implicit obedience which deſpotiſm exacts with inexonerable vigour, and which the church of Rome never fails to recommend or condemn as ſuits her intereſt or ambition, is at the beſt but precarious; and our anceſtors in defining the power of the Crown, and eſtabliſhing the rational and reciprocal obligations of protection and alle-

allegiance, gave a permanency to the laws, and a ſecurity to the Sovereign, unknown to the reſt of mankind. The Revolution, however, though perfectly agreeable to the majority, was very far from being acceptable to the whole nation. Ireland, plunged in the profoundeſt ignorance and ſuperſtition, adhered faithfully to James II. and the ferment excited by the change that had taken place being artfully preſerved in the heart of the empire, inſpired the foreign and domeſtic enemies of the ſtate, with the vain and deluſive hope of replacing the vagrant Monarch on the throne he had diſhonoured. Notwithſtanding the right of hereditary ſucceſſion had been diſputed, and was directly contrary to the principles on which the Revolution had been effected, yet the idea of lineal deſcent, ſo dangerous to civil and religious liberty in its unqualified ſenſe, had its partizans in the three kingdoms, and afforded a plauſible pretext to the exiled family to renew their efforts to regain the Crown, whenever they were ſtimulated by the common enemy to diſturb the public tranquillity.

It is very difficult to eradicate long eſtabliſhed prejudices from the human mind, and eſpecially when they are intimately blendid with the ideas of juſtice and convenience. The right of hereditary ſucceſſion had been hitherto admitted, with ſome trifling exceptions from the time of the Norman invaſion, and the people were not leſs partial to it, from a conſcious conviction of its equity, than they were from habit. This mode was alſo deemed the moſt conducive to the public good, and beſides being the leaſt liable to objections, as in fact it is, it effectually provided againſt that anarchy and confuſion which always prevail in elective monarchies whenever the Throne becomes vacant. It was on thoſe principles, that many who were highly incenſed at the arbitrary proceedings of James, and ſincerely averſe to the introduction of popery, inſiſted that he had not forfeited the Crown, and rather than violate a right which they deemed ſacred, and the denial of which they were perſuaded would be productive of greater miſchiefs than it was intended to remedy, they appeared willing to endure all the evils of deſpotiſm. Happily for civil

liberty and the Proteſtant religion, the bulk of the nation were of a different opinion. The doctrine of divine indefeaſible right, paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance, appeared no leſs offenſive to common ſenſe, than contrary to the true ends of Government and Reaſon triumphed over Prejudice. That men ſhould differ as to the particular form of Government they mean to adopt, is natural enough, when we conſider the variety of tempers they bring with them into ſociety; but that they ſhould voluntarily reſign life, liberty, and fortune, to the abſolute diſpoſal of any one man or ſet of men, without reſerving to themſelves the right of reſuming that power in extraordinary emergencies, ſeems to be ſo repugnant to the very object and foundation of all civil inſtitutions, that it is matter of aſtoniſhment a ſyſtem ſo ruinous and abſurd, ſhould ever have found place in the minds of men.

Yet while we deny the *right*, let us acknowledge that nothing can be urged againſt the *convenience* and *policy* of hereditary ſucceſſion.

The advantages that flow from it are too obvious to be diſputed, and the moſt deplorable extremity can alone juſtify a deviation from it. Whatever reaſon William might have had to congratulate himſelf on the facility with which he acquired the regal dignity, he had none to rejoice in the occupation it gave him; the wild and ſavage efforts of the Iriſh Papiſts, who, to the calamities of civil war, added the relentleſs animoſity and ſanguinary fury of religious zeal; the unreaſonable demands of the Jacobites and Preſbyterians, ever turbulent, reſtleſs and impatient of power, and the intrigues of the diſaffected in the northern counties, kept him in perpetual danger and alarm. He had to guard againſt the open deſigns of a powerful and enterpriſing enemy, who was intereſted by perſonal hatred as well as from policy and ambition, to effect if poſſible the reſtoration of the royal fugitive. His life was no leſs expoſed to the reſentment of his father-in-law, the animated exertions of Louis XIV. and the vanquiſhed party at home, than to the ſilent and more dangerous rancor of ſecret aſſaſſins, who required but a favourable moment to accompliſh their

purpoſe;—compelled to maintain his right to the Britiſh diadem, againſt the claims of his rival, whoſe pretenſions were ſupported by the Court of Verſailles, he was obliged not only to take the field in perſon and ſubmit his title to the uncertain deciſion of the ſword, but to watch with painful and unremitting vigilance, the ſuſpicious conduct of the mal-contents in England and Scotland from whoſe numbers and cabals he had more to apprehend, perhaps, than from the hoſtile and deſperate efforts of James, at the head of the Catholics in Ireland. There are few men who would covet royalty on ſuch terms. The magnanimity of William entitled him to the honours to which he had been advanced, and which his intrepidity and prudence could alone have ſecured, yet the gratitude of the nation bore no proportion to the benefits it derived from his zeal, courage, and abilities; and poſterity, in celebrating the anniverſary of his landing, has been more juſt to his memory, than his cotemporaries were to his merits. The reign of Anne was that of faction.

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The different parties whom the common danger had united, were no longer held together by the impoſing obligation of ſelf-defence. Their fears had ſubſided, and their animoſity breaking forth with redoubled violence, her time and attention were moſtly taken up in temporiſing with the Whigs, whom ſhe never cordially eſteemed, and in moderating the zeal of the Tories, for whom ſhe profeſſed a regard; nor had the new eſtabliſhment acquired that force and conſiſtency neceſſary to its ſecurity, when GEORGE I. aſcended the Throne.

If the reign of Anne paſſed without any avowed and hoſtile attempt to wreſt the ſceptre from her hands, (for the paltry expedition under Monſieur Fourbin in 1707, ſcarce deſerves attention,) it was probably owing to an idea that filial affection for her pious but infatuated father would induce her to facilitate the aſpiring views of her *ſuppoſed* brother, and that the term of his exile would not be prolonged beyond the period of her life. Whether the Queen or her Miniſters ever ſeriouſly encouraged ſuch an idea, or whether it had been dexterouſly thrown

thrown out in order to enſure her the peaceable poſſeſſion of the Crown, is unneceſſary at this diſtance of time to inquire; but the rebellion that immediately followed the acceſſion of the Elector of Hanover, gives an air of authenticity to ſuch a conjecture, and juſtifies an opinion that a reign of fourteen years, which had been preceded by repeated efforts of the Pretender and his partizans to regain the heaven they had loſt; would not have paſſed undiſturbed, if the daughter of the degraded Monarch had not, in compliance with the fond and laſt wiſhes of an unfortunate parent, agreed to the ſucceſſion of his adopted ſon at her deceaſe.

That the eleemoſynary Court at St. Germains, reduced at this time to a ſervile dependence on the precarious and oſtentatious bounty of Louis XIV. expected a revolution in its favour at her death, and that the Jacobites, and moſt of the Tories, looked forward to ſuch an event with joy and certainty, is evident from the conduct they obſerved during her reign, and the meaſures they purſued afterwards. But the Whigs were on their guard—they were not to be intimidated

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by the impotent threats, nor ſeduced by the inſolent offers of protection, which came from the Pretender—their conduct, manly and conſiſtent, was directed ſolely to the great work they had undertaken, with ſo much honour to themſelves, and advantage to their country. They ſpurned all overtures of accommodation with ſpurious Majeſty, and directing their whole force and attention to the object in view, they completed their triumph, and the ſecurity of public liberty by calling the Elector of Hanover to the throne, the inſtant it became vacant.—This ſpirited meaſure entirely fruſtrated the deſigns of the oppoſite party. Their ſplendid hopes were irretrievably deſtroyed, when they beheld the Sovereignty of the Britiſh dominions transferred for ever from their favourite, and that every effort to recover it would only tend to weaken their pretenſions, exhauſt their ſtrength and credit, and finally confirm the illuſtrious Houſe of Hanover in the legal and peaceable poſſeſſion of a Crown, to which it is not leſs entitled by its virtues, than by the generous and grateful conſent of a loyal and affectionate people: and though we may

lament

lament the ruin and misery entailed upon those who imprudently followed the desperate fortunes of the wretched phantom of Royalty, whom the foreign and domestic enemies of the empire had set up for the purpose of intestine war; yet the entire renunciation of a cause, become infamous as well as desperate, and the union and good temper that succeeded the suppression of civil discord, compensate for the mischiefs it occasioned, and incline us to forget the injuries we have sustained, in consideration of the benefits that have ultimately resulted from it. It is, however, necessary to observe, that this acquiescence in the Revolution was confined principally to England and Ireland, where every idea of disturbing the Government with any prospect of success was abandoned, even by the most sanguine of the opposite party; and if the affairs of Scotland had been conducted with liberality and moderation, and with the least attention to a permanent establishment, without any mixture of private passion and interest, the rebellion that broke out in 1715, and the subsequent commotions, down to the forlorn and final effort in 1745, would have

been avoided; for they were evidently leſs intended to reſtore the Stuart family, than to revenge perſonal inſult and injuſtice. It unfortunately happens, that in all revolutions produced by violence, the vanquiſhed party have to combat the private intereſts and reſentments of their adverſaries, and that individuals, under a pretended zeal for the public ſafety, are permitted to commit the moſt enormous exceſſes with impunity. Two ſects, animated by that fury which marks religious diſcord, equally intolerant in their principles, and no leſs ambitious of obtaining an excluſive eſtabliſhment for their favourite mode of worſhip, had long diſturbed the public peace in Scotland, and ranged in a manner, the whole kingdom under their reſpective banners. The deceitful lenity of James II. who, in tolerating diſſenters of all denominations, meant nothing more than to ſcreen the Catholics from proſecution, produced, indeed, a ſuſpenſion of hoſtilities; but the calm was temporary and fallacious. Their hatred, inflamed, not extinguiſhed by reſtraint, only waited for a favourable occaſion to burſt forth with redoubled acrimony, and epiſcopacy would

finally have triumphed, if the capacity and courage of the Sovereign had borne any proportion to the extent of his intemperate zeal. The ſucceſs with which the happy and judicious enterpriſe of the Prince of Orange was attended, gave the Preſbyterians that ſuperiority for which they had contended with unexampled fortitude and perſeverance for almoſt two centuries, and elated with their victory, and impatient of controul, they ſeized with avidity every occaſion that offered to mortify and depreſs their humbled adverſaries. A mild and generous conduct might have reclaimed and reconciled them to the new Government.—Perſecution could only ſerve to irritate and unite them by the ſtrongeſt of all poſſible ties to the deſperate fortunes of their baniſhed Sovereign; but the oppoſite party, eager to revenge injuries, which ſhould at leaſt have been forgiven, if not forgotten, preferred the latter alternative, and preſerved that hatred alive which their common intereſts and common ſafety required ſhould be buried in eternal oblivion. Unhappily for the public tranquillity, the adminiſtration of Scotland at the Revolution was confided to men of little capacity and

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leſs principle, who abuſed the power with which they were inveſted to gratify their private animoſities. This circumſtance was too favourable to the deſigns of the Jacobite party not to be ſeized with avidity; and the violence done to hereditary ſucceſſion, and the dangerous extent to which ſuch a prinple, if once admitted, might be carried, affording them ample matter for argument, it was artfully and ſucceſsfully employed to foment the ill humour that prevailed, and to precipitate a gallant and generous people into open rebellion. Severity is often dangerous, and ſeldom efficacious, and the ſeverities which were exerciſed on this occaſion with ſuch little regard to the dictates of policy and humanity, and afterwards continued without provocation, to thoſe who could not poſſibly have incurred the guilt of diſobedience, tended only to inflame the minds of men, and perhaps to create that antipathy to the new Government, with which they were reproached, and which was made a pretext for the inſults, oppreſſion, and neglect they received, until a Miniſter aroſe, to whoſe magnanimity and public virtue this country has the ſtrongeſt obligations.

You will perceive that I allude to the wiſe and vigorous adminiſtration of the late Earl of Chatham, who was called by his Sovereign in the year 1758, (as his ſon has ſince been in 1783) to extricate the nation from the multiplied calamities into which it had been plunged by a ſucceſſion of weak and improvident miniſters.

The narrow policy of Britiſh councils had induſtriouſly kept up thoſe national diſtinctions, which, excluſive of their being invidious and illiberal, were highly impolitic at that time, and could anſwer no purpoſe but to confirm men in their averſion to a Government, whoſe intereſt it was to conciliate their confidence and eſteem. The Highlanders in particular ſeemed to be the ſelected victims of miniſterial reſentment, and they experienced every mortification that meanneſs and jealouſy could ſuggeſt. Theſe men, whoſe ingenuous manners and ſimplicity of life entitled them to protection, if not to favour, had been conſidered rather as aliens and enemies, than as fellow-citizens, and lived proſcribed, as it were, among their bleak and barren mountains, until the diſcerning and com-

comprehenſive mind of Mr. Pitt, looking forward to futurity, and intent only on the proſperity of the empire, called them forth into the public ſervice of their country, and enriched the ſtate by the acquiſition of an hardy and intrepid race of warriors. The loyalty and courage they diſplayed in the four quarters of the habitable globe, in fighting the battles of thoſe who had oppreſſed them, juſtified the liberality of the Miniſter, and proved that they were not leſs ready to forgive injuries than they had been to reſent them. From thence we may date the Union of the two kingdoms, and to the many important ſervices which we have derived from the ſplendid talents of that great and diſintereſted Miniſter may be added, that of having deſtroyed, by a well-timed act of juſtice and generoſity, the ſeeds of rebellion, and extinguiſhed for ever the hopes of the Stuart family. I am not ſanguine enough to ſuppoſe that you will implicitly ſubſcribe to the doctrines I have advanced in the courſe of this letter. Neither do I imagine that you will entirely approve of my apology for thoſe who brought Charles I. to the block. I know that it is difficult to correct long-eſta-

eſtabliſhed habits, and that it requires a powerful exertion of the mind to ſubdue early prejudices; but though our education has been different, we have generally agreed as to the origin and end of Government, and with all your predilection for Monarchy, I am perſuaded you would be the laſt man in the kingdom to maintain, that no poſſible caſe can ariſe, in which it may be juſt and legal to oppoſe the Crown.

I am,

DEAR SIR,

Yours, &c.

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LETTER II.

Feb. 12, 1789.

DEAR SIR,

A Mind naturally cheerful and poſſeſſed of a degree of enthuſiaſm equal to its hilarity, will ever be averſe to the recollection of painful and unpleaſant events.

Having brought you down to the cloſe of the late reign, I would willingly paſs over a gloomy interval of twenty years, in which little elſe is to be found but diſaſter, misfortune, and diſgrace; but you have rendered it neceſſary, by the queſtions you have propoſed, to recall to your memory the imprudent meaſures that were adopted by his Majeſty, when he ſacrificed the father of the preſent Miniſter to the inordinate ambition of an unworthy favourite. To this unfortunate choice may be attributed all the ſubſequent calamities that have befallen us; nor can you poſſibly form a competent idea of the pretenſions of thoſe who take a conſpicuous

cuous lead in the preſent oppoſition, without recurring to the political hiſtory of their variegated lives.

It is from the *paſt* that we ſhould judge of the *future*, and you will certainly acknowledge that the intereſts of the nation are too important a ſtate to be hazarded on the verbal aſſurances of any man or ſet of men, however exalted their rank, or irreproachable their characters may be, and ſtill leſs ſo on the aſſurances of thoſe who have already deceived us, and who appear ready to hold any language, and to engage in any meaſure, however deſperate, that is likely to repair their ruined fortunes, or to forward their ſchemes of ambition.

In recollecting the melancholy tranſactions of this reign, you will diſcover the commencement of that impolitic and ruinous ſyſtem which was adopted on the reſignation of the late Earl of Chatham, in the humiliating and diſgraceful conteſt, in which the Sovereign was engaged with an individual, from whoſe irregularities in private life, the Miniſter promiſed himſelf an eaſy

triumph over public liberty. He was, indeed, defeated and driven from office, but notwithſtanding the change of Miniſters that enſued, we trace the ſame ſpirit and the ſame pernicious influence pervading his Majeſty's Councils down to the concluſion of the diſaſtrous war with America, which may be ſaid to be the laſt, as the attack on Mr. Wilkes had been the firſt, enterpriſe againſt the conſtitutional rights of the people. You are no ſtranger to the deplorable condition to which this country was reduced, when the late Marquis of Rockingham was conſulted in 1782, and urged the abſolute neceſſity of "PEACE and OECONOMY." The truth of the preſcription inſpired a confidence in the ſagacity of thoſe who recommended it, and his Majeſty, after having been a truant to his intereſts for a length of years, returned to thoſe principles from which he appeared to have departed on his acceſſion to the Throne. Had the Marquis have lived, his inflexible integrity and the authority which his rank and property gave him over thoſe who acted with him, and who could not make a party without him, would probably have obliged them to preſerve a conſiſtency of conduct.

It is ſcarce neceſſary to remind you, that though his Lordſhip was placed at the head of the Treaſury, as the Duke of Portland has been ſince, it was not in conſequence of his abilities, for they were below mediocrity, but by way of pledge to the nation, that it had nothing to apprehend from the Adminiſtration being confided to men who were not only inſolvent, but ſuſpected to be void of principle. His Lordſhip and Grace were in fact bail for the fidelity, and without ſome ſuch ſecurity they would never have been permitted to hold a reſponſible ſituation. You know as well as I do, the general diſtruſt in which they were held, all men ſubſcribed to their abilities, but none allowed them a grain of integrity, and ſplendid talents united with an avowed contempt of all principle, are not to be truſted.

With ſuch a man as the Marquis of Rockingham at the head of the Treaſury, they knew that the whole patronage of office, as well as the whole ſhare of public buſineſs, would fall to their management

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and diſpoſal. The people they were ſenſible would not truſt them, and they on their part, would not ſubmit to act under any but thoſe whom they could manage as they thought proper. This may account for the indecent clamour they afterwards excited againſt the Earl of Shelburne, who certainly ſaved India by the Peace he made, and againſt whoſe political conduct I will defy even the virulence of party to produce any ſolitary proof.

The broken and disjointed materials of the Rockingham faction refuſed to act under his Lordſhip, becauſe they were aware that he would not condeſcend to be a cypher in an oſtenſible ſituation. Their object was dominion, and the Duke of Portland was to be dragged from Ireland, where he was perfectly ſatisfied, to ſucceed the Marquis of Rockingham. But this attempt to monopolize the executive power was defeated, and the gentlemen reſigned in diſguſt. I muſt now entreat your attention to what follows, and I appeal to your memory for the truth of what I ſhall relate; you were at that time in Parliament, and I well remem-

ber, expreſſed your aſtoniſhment at the inſult offered to the nation, and your deteſtation of the ſcandalous renunciation of thoſe principles by which the party had acquired the public confidence. The gentleman who felt the moſt hurt on the occaſion, and who little ſuſpected at that time to be rivalled in parliamentary conſequence, by the man whom he has ſince raiſed from pennyleſs obſcurity into public notice, has changed ſides and principles ſo often, that credulity herſelf would be unpardonable in confiding in his aſſurances.

After having ſupported Lord North, and juſtified as far as noiſe and impudence would juſtify, the iniquitous deciſion relative to the Middleſex election, in which the rights of every elector was violated—after having defended the arbitrary and illegal commitment of the Lord Mayor, and treated with mockery and contempt, the petition and remonſtrances which were preſented from all parts of the kingdom, againſt the unconſtitutional encroachments of one Houſe of Parliament, and after having aſſerted, that the ſenſe of the people was not to be collected

lected from petitions and remonſtrances, but from thoſe who were the objects of their crimination, we find him deſerting the Miniſter under whoſe auſpices he had conmenced his political career, and whoſe dirty work he had performed with a degree of zeal and ability, that led him to think his ſervices ill-rewarded by a ſeat at the Treaſury Board. If his Lordſhip had complied with the extravagant demands of youthful ambition, he would probably have been ſupported in the American war, as warmly as he had been in the affair of Colonel Luttrel; but it is unneceſſary to appeal to conjecture, when we have facts to direct the judgement. You will recollect that this gentleman aſſumed a different character, and became a determined Whig; that he talked of Conſtitutional rights; declared taxation and repreſentation to be inſeparable; reproached his former patron with treachery and corruption; pronounced him to be infamous, and menaced him with impeachment and the block. The ſincerity of his converſion was deemed apocryphical by many, but the ardour with which he oppoſed the proſecution of the unequal conteſt with the Colonies, impoſed

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upon the bulk of the nation, and he became insolent in proportion as he became popular. Those who interpret words according to their general and received acceptation, imagined that the day of retribution was at hand, and they were confirmed in this opinion, when the right honourable gentleman declared in the House of Commons, that "*bad as he believed matters to have been before he entered into office, he had found them much worse afterwards.*"

In possession of evidence sufficient to ensure conviction, the friends of Lord North trembled for his safety. His enemies anticipated his fall, and the people (who seem doomed to be the eternal dupes of bottle conjurers of one sort or another) expected that some atonement would be made for the wanton waste of blood and treasure which had been lavished in an iniquituous war; but while men were agitated by the different sentiments of hatred and affection, overtures of accommodation were offered, not by the *accused*, but by the ACCUSER, pledged as he was by the most solemn engagements to bring the author of our calamities to an ac-

count. This ſecond apoſtaſy removed all doubts reſpecting the infamy of the firſt, and the inſult offered to the common ſenſe of mankind, was loſt in the aſtoniſhment excited by the unnatural union that followed—an union which ſet morals and religion at defiance. An attempt to reduce the Sovereign to a cypher and render themſelves independent of Parliament occaſioned their diſmiſſion, and this adminiſtration, founded in fraud and formed for the worſt of purpoſes and from the worſt of motives, may be ſaid to have died in childbed.

I have taken a review of the political conduct of this gentleman merely to convince you that no dependance can be placed in his aſſurances after the experience we have had, and that the intereſts of the country cannot be entruſted where ſo thorough a contempt of all decency and principle exiſts without evident danger of their being betrayed. The the heat of controverſy having ſubſided and the nation having recovered from the aſtoniſhment occaſioned by an event no leſs deplorable than unexpected, it may not be improper to examine the claim which has been

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ſet up by a certain deſcription of men for the purpoſe of attaching the Prince of Wales the more ſtrongly to their intereſt, and of reducing the ſervants of the Crown to the painful alternative of offending his Royal Highneſs, or of betraying the truſt repoſed in them.

As this matter has been already decided, it may be thought ſuperfluous to reviſe it; but though it has been decided, it has not been diſcuſſed in that full and ample manner which a ſubject of ſuch magnitude and importance deſerves. The rapidity and vehemence of political debate in all public aſſemblies allow but little leiſure for recollection and ſtill leſs for reflection: beſides it is evident that the gentlemen who ſtarted the queſtion intended, by the manner in which they introduced it, to take Parliament by ſurpriſe, and by the menaces they threw out to *intimidate* thoſe whom they could not entrap. Their argument, if I do not forget, conſiſted of two parts.—In the one they maintainted that the heir apparent, on the declared inability of the Sovereign to execute the royal functions, poſſeſſed an indefeaſible right to the

the Regency, and in the other, that his Royal Highneſs having through extreme moderation waved his claim and ſubmitted to receive the Regency from Parliament, it could not in decency be refuſed to him. The former of theſe was certainly intended to preclude all debate, for contention ceaſes where a clear and indefeaſible right exiſts; but leſt this doctrine, ſo repugnant to the letter and ſpirit of the Conſtitution, ſhould give umbrage to thoſe who had not renounced all regard to principle, the virtues of the Prince were called in auxiliary aid, and what *honour* could not conſiſtently grant, was modeſtly exacted from *generoſity*. My reſpect for the Prince will not ſuffer me to enter into a diſcuſſion of what ought never to be queſtioned. If, however, the claim of his Royal Highneſs was abſolute and indefeaſible, as his pretended friends aſſert, it was not only unneceſſary but injudicious to expoſe it to the uncertain iſſue of a Parliamentary deciſion, and if he poſſeſſes no ſuch right, it was a breach of duty to the public, and an inſult to his Royal Highneſs, to have propoſed it. Neither do I perceive with what truth and conſiſtency they can attribute any merit to their

Royal Patron for declining to aſſume an authority to which he was not at that time entitled. This boaſted moderation reſolves itſelf into an improvident ſacrifice of his dignity, in one inſtance, and in the other to a mockery of our underſtanding. This ill adviſed attempt to ſurpriſe and afterwards to bully Parliament into a ſurrender of its rights, meeting with general diſapprobation, the gentlemen inſtantly changed their tone, and apprehenſive they might hurt the cauſe they meant to ſerve, they vociferouſly exclaimed that his Royal Highneſs was totally ignorant of what they had done, and that no previous communication had paſſed between them on the ſubject. This *may* be true, though from the ſteady ſupport they continue to receive from Carlton houſe, from whence they ought to be baniſhed, I am inclined to ſuſpect the contrary.

If I had been in Parliament, it is probable I ſhould have addreſſed the mover of this extraordinary buſineſs in nearly the following manner:

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"While you preſerved a decent reſpect for the Conſtitution, your oppoſition to the meaſures of Government, violent and indecent as it has been, might, in ſtrict candour, have been attributed to a regard for the public intereſt, and the ſincerity of your profeſſions have paſſed unqueſtioned, but when we hear you advance doctrines not only novel, and dangerous in their conſequences, but abſolutely hoſtile to the RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE, which, in this country, you are not to be told take PRECEDENCE of PREROGATIVE, it becomes neceſſary to refute them. It is of little import to inquire whether you were *authoriſed* to make this experiment on the vigilance and fidelity of Parliament, or or whether it was the reſult of an intemperate zeal for the ſervice of your Royal Patron.—You have failed in the attempt, and the Prince has perhaps loſt more by the *defeat*, than he would have gained by the *victory*. It is, however, extraordinary, that with your experience and abilities, you ſhould have hazarded a declaration, which, while it betrays an unpardonable ignorance of the laws, marks a total contempt of all principle; nor was the attempt to ſurpriſe

Parliament into a ſurrender of its power, and TRUST, conducted with that decorum and good humour neceſſary to enſure it ſucceſs.—If you had been moved, like the Quakers, by a ſudden impulſe, and unable to reſiſt the effects of immediate inſpiration, you had ariſen to ejaculate effuſions of loyalty in advance to your future Sovereign, ſome excuſe might be made for the abſurdities and contradictions that appeared in your proceedings, but the mode of attack was evidently preconcerted—the order of battle had been previouſly arranged, and, confident of ſucceſs, you came down to Weſtminſter to reduce us to *unconditional ſubmiſſion.* You were ſenſible that Parliament meant to inveſt the Prince of Wales with the exerciſe of the Regal dignity during the lamentable indiſpoſition of his Royal Father, but as an acquieſcence in ſuch an inveſture would have deprived you of an opportunity of diſplaying the extent of your *gratitude*, it was reſolved to ſpurn the proffered generoſity of the nation, and extort by FORCE, what duty and perſonal affection would cheerfully and voluntarily have granted—the aukward dilemma to which your ſervility, to ſay nothing

thing worſe of it, has reduced his Royal Highneſs, muſt give him no favourable idea of your *prudence*, whatever it may do of your *zeal*; and however mortified and humbled you may feel upon the occaſion, the triumph of the Miniſtry would have been incomplete, if the people had not derived an additional ſecurity for their Liberties from the event. The queſtion of Right was neither ſtarted by the Miniſtry, nor by Parliament, but by YOURSELF, and if narrowly inveſtigated, will be found to have for its ultimate object, not ſo much a full exerciſe of the Regal authority, unfettered by legal reſtraints, as AN INHERENT RIGHT IN THE PRINCE OF WALES TO DETHRONE THE KING, not out of complaiſance to his Royal Highneſs, not from a ſincere confidence in that moderation which you affect to admire in him, but that you and your party might impoſe upon his credulity and inexperience, and uſurp the government of the empire.—That this was your deſign may be eaſily collected, not only from the arguments you employed, but from the ſilence you obſerved; for you did not condeſcend to explain *what* conſtitutes an incapacity in the Crown

to govern, nor *who* was to judge of the exiſtence of that incapacity—a queſtion ſo delicate and momentous in every reſpect; ſhould not have been left undecided, and when you thought proper to aſſert a right in the Prince to depoſe his Father, it was at leaſt incumbent in you to have defined the occaſion which would have juſtified ſo groſs an outrage to the received maxims of morality. I confeſs to you, Sir, that the irregular and indecent manner in which this buſineſs has been conducted, has diminiſhed the high opinion I had conceived of your underſtanding. Never was any thing ſo ill managed, that had been previouſly reſolved upon; nor was any thing ever reſolved upon, that had leſs reaſon and juſtice to ſupport it. Let us examine the facts as they ſtand in the order of time.——The King is unhappily afflicted with a diſorder which incapacitates him to govern. In this diſtreſſing predicament the Parliament aſſembles, and actuated by duty and perſonal affection to the Sovereign, as well as by a regard to the public ſafety, it aſſures itſelf of the exiſtence of the alledged incapacity before it proceeds to ſupply the chaſm in the conſtitution.—In order

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to give weight and dignity to its meaſures, and to guard againſt the poſſibility of violating the Rights of perſons on the one hand, or of ſacrificing its political obligations on the other, it is propoſed to examine the public records for information, in order to direct its proceedings. In the midſt of its deliberations you make your appearance, accompanied by your ſatellites, and declare that all reſearches are uſeleſs, for the Heir Apparent being on the ſpot, and not labouring under any legal diſqualification, is INDEPENDENT of the authority of Parliament, and of RIGHT entitled to the adminiſtration of affairs, not by their nomination or appointment, but by the LAW OF THE LAND, which you avow yourſelf ready to prove: and that if this propoſition is to be combated, it muſt be the *ſtatutes*, and not *precedents*, which decide whether it was *well* or *ill* founded. Here, Sir, the confidential Servants of the Crown, ever ready to meet great public queſtions, fairly and manfully joined iſſue, and were content to abide by the determination you propoſed; but the inſtant the challenge was accepted, Mr. Burke, full of anger and reſentment, exclaimed moſt

vehemently againſt their want of *moderation*; while another honourable Gentleman, who is no leſs *honourable* in his *private* than in his *public character*, joined the cry, and with all the inſolence of upſtart greatneſs, menaced Parliament with the indignation of ALL Carlton-Houſe, if it preſumed to diſpute the validity of the pretended claim. That you, Sir, ſhould endeavour to eſtabliſh a principle ſo favourable to your *preſent* views, and ſo repugnant to your *former* ſentiments, will not be wondered at, when we reflect on the little degree of political integrity and conſiſtency you have ſhewn throughout life; and though we are willing to pardon blunders in Mr. Burke, we feel no inclination to paſs over in ſilence the forward impertinence of your rival, who, intoxicated with the proſpect of being preſerved, through the miſtaken bounty of the Prince, from beggary and a priſon, ſeems to have forgotten that he holds his ſeat by ſufferance, and that though "*Juſtice is a blind, limping dame, to whom he never could liſten,*" ſhe may poſſibly overtake him when he leaſt expects it. You have thought proper, Sir, to deny that a power reſides in the two Houſes

of

of Parliament, to ſupply a vacancy in the Throne, whenever it may happen; but if they do not poſſeſs this power, what title has the preſent family to the Crown?—How you can reconcile this doctrine to the Whig principles which you affect to profeſs, cannot eaſily be imagined; but to convince you, Sir, that the law on this occaſion is clear and explicit, I ſhall quote the authority of Blackſtone, who, notwithſtanding his bias to Monarchy, and the virulence with which he ſpeaks of the execution of Charles I. acknowledges in direct terms, that "*Whenever* "*a queſtion ariſes between the Society at large,* "*and any magiſtrate veſted with powers ori-* "*ginally delegated by that Society, it muſt be* "*decided by the voice of that Society itſelf.*— "*There is not another tribunal on earth to re-* "*ſort to.*" But the paſſage the moſt applicable to the queſtion under conſideration is in the next page, where he lays it down as a fundamental principle of the Engliſh conſtitution, that "*Whenever a vacancy* BY ANY "MEANS WHATEVER *ſhould happen in the* "*throne, the right of diſpoſing of this vacancy* "*ſeems to reſult naturally to the Lords and Com-* "*mons, the truſtees and repreſentatives of the na-*

"*tion,*

" *tion, for there are no other hands in which it*
" *can ſo properly be truſted; and there is a ne-*
" *ceſſity of its being entruſted ſome where, elſe*
" *the whole frame of government muſt be diſ-*
" *ſolved and periſh.*" * The Commons of England, who have certainly the greateſt ſtake in this momentous queſtion, were proceeding to decide upon it with all poſſible unanimity and good temper, when their harmony was interrupted by the premature production of a claim which could not in any ſenſe whatever benefit the cauſe it was meant to ſerve; nor can you, Sir, in your extenſive reading, produce any one inſtance in contradiction of the authority that has been quoted. Here, Sir, is a full and poſitive refutation of what you have thought proper to aſſert in one Houſe of Parliament, and Lord Loughborough in the other, whoſe pertneſs in replying ſo peremptorily to Lord Camden, who is certainly a much better lawyer, and I believe in my conſcience, a very honeſt man, ſhall be noticed hereafter. There is not a ſtudent of a year's ſtanding in any of the Inns of Court, that does not know the Prince of Wales cannot legally, of his own proper right and authority, aſſume

* Blackſtone's Comm. Vol. I. Book i. ch. 3.

the Regal dignity until he obtains poſſeſſion of it by the *demiſe of the Crown*; and whatever meaning you might mentally have reſerved to yourſelf in maintaining the contrary opinion, it carries on the face of it a deſign to revive the exploded nonſenſe of divine indefeaſible right, and render the monarchy abſolute and independent of Parliament."

Such, my dear Sir, would have been the language I would have held if it had been poſſible for us to have exchanged ſituations on the ſixteenth day of laſt December. Nor ſhould I heſitate to addreſs myſelf to the following purport to the deluded youth, whoſe generoſity has been ſo ſhamefully abuſed. Confident that the integrity of my intentions would have pleaded my excuſe for the freedom of my diſcourſe.

" If any thing, Sir, could poſſibly add to our calamity and diſtreſs in this awful and melancholy moment, it is the part which you have taken in the preſent ſituation of affairs. We were induced to pardon your irregulari-

ties in private life in conſideration of your youth, and the contagion of bad example.

Your rank expoſed you to temptations in which every gentleman thinks himſelf at liberty to indulge without controul, and which at your age, and with your little experience of mankind, are perhaps difficult to reſiſt. Partial to you from affection, we attributed your levities to the natural gaiety of your temper, and though we beheld your entrance into public, marked by avowed diſobedience, and perſonal inſult to the beſt of parents, we never ſuſpected that you would have proceeded ſtep by ſtep, from a renunciation of his parental authority, to a direct attack upon the rights of his Crown. The party to whom you have imprudently given your confidence and ſupport, have reduced you from a ſituation the moſt enviable, to a condition the moſt painful and humiliating. They have ſet you, Sir, at variance with the nation, and as far as we can judge of their conduct hitherto, there is an appearance of a ſyſtematic and preconcerted plan to involve you in difficulties and diſgrace.

The

The ſtory of George Barnwell, except in the cataſtrophe, is no longer a fiction. Taking advantage of your youth, they induſtriouſly applied themſelves to the paſſions, and the arts of ſeduction have been practiſed with a degree of ſucceſs proportioned to the magnitude and criminality of their object.

Having engroſſed you to themſelves, it became neceſſary for their own ſecurity to preſerve the aſcendency they had acquired, and an event no leſs deplorable than unexpected, and which your indiſcretions may have perhaps occaſioned, or at leaſt accelerated, furniſhed them with an opportunity the moſt favourable to their purpoſe.

Having ſtimulated you to violate all filial duty and reſpect for your Father, it is no wonder they ſhould work on your ambition, and excite you to diveſt him of the Regal dignity.

Whenever the obligations of morality loſe their reſtrictive powers on the mind, vice marches with giant ſtride. Theſe gentlemen, as they call themſelves; theſe ſelf-

created

created guardians of your rights, in plunging you into ſhameleſs riot and profuſion, meant nothing more at firſt than to render you the inſtrument of their criminal deſigns, and reduce you to a mean and ſervile dependence on their party. They had not conceived the daring and profligate idea of engaging you in an enterpriſe full of danger and diſhonour, and but for the diſorder which afflicts his Majeſty, we ſhould have remained unacquainted with the extent of their infamy. The inſtant it was found that Parliament reprobated the claim of right to the Regency, which it was pretended you poſſeſſed indefeaſibly and inherently, it was declared you were ignorant of the meaſure, and that it had been propoſed without your authority, and without any previous communication with you on the ſubject. The little credit to which this gentleman is entitled, would have inclined us to queſtion his veracity at all events, but on this occaſion, every circumſtance contradicts his aſſertion, and proves that a claim which tended to inveſt you with the regal dignity was not offenſive to you.

We

We acquit you of a deliberate intention to perplex the government, or divide the nation, but the exertion of an undue influence to obtain a majority in favour of a queſtion ſo unpopular, and unconſtitutional, muſt be matter of regret to every honeſt man in the kingdom, becauſe it diſcovered an impatience to poſſeſs that, "*which after ſome few hours had been thine without offence.*" Your relation to the throne rendered it hazardous to approach it by any irregular means. Your character muſt have ſuffered, whatever might have been the reſult, but as your friends have no ſcruples of the kind, they were determined to proceed.

Alarmed on finding that the Houſe of Commons would not compliment away the rights of the Crown, and aware of the impreſſion ſuch firmneſs and integrity would make on the minds of the people to your diſadvantage, they inſtantly took the guilt and odium of the meaſure on themſelves, and in doing it, did no more than what might reaſonably be expected from men of their characters and principles. But if you were really innocent of all concern in this

this buſineſs, it was incumbent on you to have confirmed the doubtful teſtimony of thoſe gentlemen, by a formal diſavowal of their conduct. They may give what explanation they pleaſe to the claim which they made, but the fact is, that it was a direct attempt to DETHRONE the King, and in this light it is conſidered, both in and out of Parliament. If it has been ſtarted with your concurrence and approbation, we have only to lament that you ſhould have been betrayed into a meaſure ſo contrary to your moral and political obligations, and if thoſe who made it, really had the effrontery to propoſe it unknown to you, it is neceſſary for the preſervation of your reputation, that you withdraw your confidence from them.

Without this act of juſtice to yourſelf, and to the nation, it will be difficult to remove the imputation under which you labour, of having countenanced a claim no leſs hoſtile to the rights of the people, than repugnant to the principles on which your family was advanced to the throne. Thoſe who told you that the Prince of Wales poſſeſſes an indefeaſible right to the Regency,

on

on the incapacity of a Sovereign to diſcharge the Royal functions, muſt either be ignorant of the laws, or they muſt have meant to have impoſed a falſehood on you to ſerve their private intereſts. Your right, Sir, to the *Crown* is not indefeaſible, much leſs to the Regency, for the minor cannot poſſibly include the major without a ſubverſion of all argument and common ſenſe. Nor is it even hereditary but by the *courteſy* of the Conſtitution; for it is expreſſly declared that the Kings, Lords, and Commons in Parliament aſſembled, have the right to alter the ſucceſſion, and if they did not poſſeſs this right, our Government would loſe the diſtinguiſhing characteriſtic of a limited monarchy—which is not only to reſtrain the authority of the Crown within the boundaries of law, but to preſcribe and regulate the ſucceſſion to it, as exigencies may happen to require. It was upon thoſe conditions, Sir, that your anceſtors were called to the throne. We have no predilection for any particular name or family, it is of little conſequence to us, whether George or James reigns, provided he governs according to law, and if you had been properly inſtructed in the hiſtory

of your country, and eſpecially with that period of it from whence we date a free Conſtitution, you would have diſcovered, that it is of little import to us from what quarry we fetch the key ſtone that binds the arch together."

With reſpect, my dear Sir, to the marriage ſo confidently aſſerted, and ſo generally believed to have taken place between the Prince of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert, though I am unwilling to admit of its having any foundation in truth, I am not in the leaſt diſpoſed to treat it as an idle rumour undeſerving of notice, and thoſe who repreſent it as ſuch, are neither friends to the Prince, nor to their Country. On the contrary, I am perſuaded that it merits the moſt ſerious and poſitive refutation, and that thoſe who ſcout it merely as frivolous, are laying the ground work of much future uneaſineſs to his Royal Highneſs for the purpoſe perhaps of turning it to their own advantage whenever he may withdraw his protection from them. Inſtead of coming forward and denying the fact fully and explicitly in the face of the whole world, as they ought to have done,

they

they have had recourſe to the moſt pitiful evaſions, as if it was their wiſh to *encourage* and not to *ſuppreſs* the ſuſpicion that prevails. One of them arraigns the motives of Mr. Rolle, whoſe laudable anxiety for the intereſts of religion induced him to aſk for ſatisfactory intelligence on a ſubject which materially concerns every citizen in the empire.

Another, who has happily united in himſelf the avowed profligacy of Charles, with the ſanctified hypocriſy of Joſeph Surface, and whoſe very appearance in Parliament is a libel upon the Conſtitution, confined himſelf to ſarcaſtic obſervations, railed at SLANDERERS! and attempted to ridicule what he did not think proper to refute. A third man of Buckram gets up and declares, that the Prince could not enter into ſuch an engagement, BECAUSE there was an expreſs Act of Parliament againſt it, and theſe they call ARGUMENTS! Good God, Sir, what is this but an impudent mockery of our underſtanding? There are poſitive laws againſt theft and murder, yet thieves and aſſaſſins abound, and from the encouragement that

has been given of late years to vice and profligacy of every kind, they are likely to increaſe, even Mr. Barrington (for he too is a man of great abilities) may aſpire to a ſeat in the Houſe of Commons, and may probably feel hurt at the partiality of his fortune which condemns him to Newgate, while a more ſucceſsful but not more ingenious or more fertile adventurer braves his creditors and the laws, and ſhines the HERO of Parliamentary Debate.

An Act of Parliament, my dear Sir, may *forbid*, but cannot always prevent crimes; if it could, Mr. Burke's reform bill, which has hitherto ſaved at the ſpicket and let out at the bung, might be extended to the Court of Juſtice; and Newgate and the King's Bench, (to the great comfort of the friends of oppoſition) be converted into India warehouſes.

A fourth gentleman, whom you will recollect ſomeyears paſt, to have ſeen at .... very gravely aſſerted, "*that what was not law could not be fact.*" The novelty and abſurdity of ſuch a doctrine, I am ſure, will diſ-

compoſe the ſettled gravity of your muſcles, and you will ſmile, that a man not abſolutely in his dotage, ſhould reaſon ſo weakly.—Of all thoſe who *oppoſed* Mr. Rolle, not one of them *anſwered* him; nor could they diſavow the marriage without throwing themſelves into what logicians call a dilemma. The wives of moſt of them, as well as of ſeveral others, who ought to bluſh for their want of delicacy, or of ſpirit, live in habits of intimacy with the lady in in queſtion; and one of them, it is ſaid, is fed by her bounty. A formal diſavowal of the marriage would have occaſioned a terrible ſacrifice of female reputation at the weſt end of the town: the women were alarmed, and though they were content it ſhould remain as a problem, they would by no means ſubmit to a deciſive anſwer, which muſt inevitably have fixed an indelible ſtain on their characters for ever. This may account for the windings and turnings, the ſhifts and evaſions of Oppoſition, which, after all has terminated in what men of honour will ever conſider as a mean and diſgraceful compromiſe.

Having

Having ſtated to you the arguments employed by the party to get rid of a queſtion which they were bound to meet fairly and openly, and having accounted, to the beſt of my judgement, for the extraordinary conduct they held upon that occaſion, I ſhall not heſitate to confeſs my firm diſbelief of the Prince of Wales having formed a matrimonial connection which would be no leſs diſhonourable to himſelf than dangerous to the ſtate, from a thorough conviction that his Royal Highneſs, whoſe immediate duty it may hereafter be to preſerve the laws in all their force and purity, would not be ſo inſenſible to his own intereſts, or ſo regardleſs of the high and ſacred truſt which is likely to deſcend to him, as to violate what he is bound by every tie of honour and religion to reſpect and faithfully obſerve. Neither can I ſuppoſe him capable of abuſing the unſuſpecting generoſity of an amiable woman by a ceremony, which, however ſolemnly it could be performed, or however often repeated, he muſt be ſenſible, would be null and void. In the one inſtance he would have flown in the face of the laws, and in the other he would have practiſed a cruel

and

and wicked deception on the credulous ſimplicity of a woman, unacquainted perhaps with the legal impediments to her ever becoming his wife. It is on theſe grounds, my dear Sir, that I reject the infamous calumny, as falſe and ill-founded, of his Royal Highneſs having gratified the vanity, or lulled the conſcience of Mrs. Fitzherbert by means which would not only have deſtroyed his peace of mind for ever, but have rendered him incapable of ſucceeding to the Crown; and ſurely, Sir, it is infinitely more honourable to the Prince, and more conſonant with the acknowledged magnanimity and goodneſs of his heart to declare, that his reverence for the laws, and his gratitude to the Country that called his family to the Throne, render him incapable of a meaſure derogatory to his dignity, and ſo fatal to his repoſe, rather than to ſeek, as his pretended friends have done, by illiberal abuſe and undiſguiſed ſophiſtry, to divert the people from the contemplation of a ſubject which is ſo ultimately blended with their civil and religious rights.

Neither

Neither do I believe that the proud and independent ſpirit of the nation would ſuffer, at any period whatever, any individual, however exalted his rank may be, to violate the fundamental principles of the Conſtitution with impunity. There is a fund of public virtue and good ſenſe yet remaining among us, which corruption cannot deſtroy, nor art impoſe upon; and thus ſecured, we have nothing to apprehend, though a general jail delivery, and a repeal of the penal laws, ſhould be among the firſt meaſures of the new Adminiſtration with which we are menaced.

Having explained to you my reaſons for believing the report of the marriage to be void of foundation, I ſhall ſtate to you the probable conſequences that might follow from an union ſo dangerous and impolitic.—Thoſe who look only to the preſent moment may not perhaps perceive the ill conſequences that would reſult from the ſolemnization of ſuch a marriage, but the ſtrongeſt and moſt forcible objections exiſt to it, both from religious and political conſiderations, and the confuſion and miſchiefs which ſuch a con-

connection would inevitably produce in the country, require that it ſhonld be fully and unequivocally diſavowed; not from any doubts of the rectitude of the intentions of the Prince, or from a ſuppoſition that the lady would be ſo ill adviſed as to interfere in public affairs, or uſe an improper influence, but to prevent an impoſtor ſtarting up, at a diſtant period, and calling himſelf the Son of Mrs. Fitzherbert by the Prince of Wales; and this apprehenſion, which may not be very remote, and which is far from being chimerical, is founded on the evidence of hiſtory. The ſterility of the lady may, indeed, preſerve the preſent generation from an evil of ſuch magnitude, but what ſecurity can be given that poſterity ſhall not ſuffer from a report of this nature being ſuffered to live uncontradicted. The general reception it meets with at this moment, will enſure it ſtronger credit at a latter period, when the means of refutation are removed; and who can anſwer to the nation that France, ever intriguing, ever ſtudious and fertile in expedients to embroil her neighbours, will not diſturb the public tranquillity at the diſtance of half a century,

by the introduction of another Perkin Warbeck?

It behoves us to provide againſt diſtant calamities as well as to defend ourſelves from preſent danger, and thoſe who ſuppoſe that the Court of Verſailles will not profit from a circumſtance ſo favourable to its purpoſe, and ſo likely to involve us in civil war, whenever it ſuits her intereſt, muſt either have forgotten, or elſe be totally unacquainted with the artful and inſincere conduct it has obſerved ſince the firſt eſtabliſhment of monarchy in France. Give me leave alſo to add, that much real danger might ariſe to the Proteſtant religion from this unhappy connection. The active zeal of the Popiſh clergy has received a freſh ſtimulus from this imaginary union, and the Catholic party, deluded by an aſſurance that the penal laws will be repealed, give their whole influence and ſupport to the Oppoſition.

We appear to be totally unacquainted with the principles of a ſect which deſerves expulſion by their own maxims, and which

can never obtain a legal eſtabliſhment in this country, until the Conſtitution be ſubverted; and that the Catholics would attempt the ſubverſion of it, cannot be doubted, when we recollect to what extremes their zeal for the intereſts of religion will tranſport them; and ſhould the Throne at any future period countenance or ſupport their pretenſions, rely upon it that they will ſhew themſelves reſolved and formidable. Believe me, Sir, that the civil and religious liberties of the Britiſh empire will be at an end whenever the Catholics are admitted to even the moſt trifling participation of the legiſlative authority. The haughty and intolerant ſpirit of Rome will never admit of a ſincere and cordial coalition with men of a different religion, and wherever we find an appearance of union, the well diſſembled harmony does not flow from the mild and generous dictates of humanity, but is impoſed by the more potent authority of the civil power; for if we except the recent toleration allowed in France, and throughout the dominions of the Emperor, there is not an inſtance of the free exerciſe of the Proteſtant religion being permitted where that of Rome is eſta-

bliſhed. Her prieſts, ſelected in general from the very dregs of the people, are at once illiterate and unprincipled, and being educated in the firm belief that thoſe of a different faith are doomed to ſuffer the eternal vengeance of offended heaven, they inculcate, with pious and unremitting zeal, the ſhameful and horrid doctrine that teaches by far the ſmalleſt portion of the human race to execrate their brethren, as creatures obnoxious to the Divinity, and objects of his ſevereſt wrath both here and hereafter. Accuſtomed from my earlieſt infancy to eſtimate mankind by the rectitude of their moral conduct, and not by the mode or extent of their faith, I reprobated the odious diſtinction of Papiſt and Proteſtant, and lamented that all my fellow citizens were not equally eligible in law to partake of the honours and emoluments of the State. The excluſion of the Roman Catholics from all places of public truſt appeared to me, in earlier life, an injuſtice, and that though the policy of former times rendered it neceſſary to proſcribe them, yet judging of their moderation by the more liberal and more enlightened Proteſtant, I regarded the penal

laws

laws as impolitic and oppreſſive—I am a convert from that opinion—an opinion founded in humanity, but which experience has convinced me is erroneous. If the Roman Catholics of the preſent time are leſs dangerous to the State than their anceſtors were in the 16th century, it is not that they are leſs hoſtile and intolerant, but that they have leſs power to be miſchievous, and that the laws have happily impoſed a decent but reluctant ſubmiſſion to the authority of Government. It is not in England where they are under reſtraint, that their ſentiments and principles can be thoroughly known; when they do not diſturb the public tranquillity, they neither excite nor deſerve the attention of the civil magiſtrate. The general ſpirit of toleration which prevails in England, and which forming a part of our manners, condemns the inſolence of examining into the religious opinions of others, is another reaſon why the principles of the Roman Catholics are ſo little known to us. Even in Ireland, where they are more numerous and more cloſely connected with each other, than in any other part of his Majeſty's dominions, and of courſe leſs cautious and reſerved, the full

extent

extent of their rancour and averſion to their Proteſtant fellow ſubjects is not perhaps known. This knowledge can only be acquired by living among them, where their religion is legally eſtabliſhed, and where the Proteſtant becomes in his turn the ſuppliant object of toleration. I regret the occaſion that compels me to ſay ſo much againſt a body of people, many of whom are reſpectable in private life, and who ſeem entitled by their numbers to an equal participation of a free Government, and this regret does not ariſe from any apprehenſion of being reproached with an illiberal animoſity towards them, but from that reluctance which a benevolent mind feels on being compelled from a principle of juſtice to declare unpleaſant truths; and it well deſerves the conſideration of Parliament, how long the freedom of our excellent Conſtitution will ſurvive the abolition of the laws againſt men who reſemble Cæſar in not being able to bear a maſter, and Pompey, in their reluctance to have a companion—"*Nec quemquam jam ferre poteſt Cæſarve priorem Pompejuſve parem.*" Thus, Sir, I have finiſhed the unpleaſant taſk you have impoſed on me.

I have

I have given my undiſguiſed ſentiments on the conduct of Oppoſition, and my reaſons why they ſhould not be reſtored to power; but even if their characters were unexceptionable, I ſhould be ſorry to ſee a change take place in the public councils. The flouriſhing condition of the empire, the extreme confidence which all the powers of Europe have in the integrity and capacity of the preſent Miniſters, are arguments of great force and validity with me againſt their diſmiſſion. Nor can I be prevailed upon to admit that any private engagements or perſonal partialities can in decency be urged in excuſe for the Regent's introducing men into the firſt departments of the State, from whom we have every thing to fear and nothing to hope. The prerogatives annexed to the Regal dignity are intended ſolely for the *public good*, and not for the aggrandiſement of individuals; and though I ſhould be the laſt man in the kingdom to deny the Prince the legal exerciſe of the authority confided to him by the Conſtitution, I ſhould conſider his removing men who have deſerved well of their country, and with whoſe Adminiſtration no fault can be found, as an abuſe of the

the prerogative, and which he himſelf will be the firſt to condemn, when time and experience ſhall remove the deluſion under which he unhappily appears to have acted of late.

I am,

DEAR SIR,

Very truly Your's, &c."